

Land Status and Ownership, Use and Access Patterns Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests

Forest Plan Revision Collaborative Group Meeting - December 1, 2012

Forest Service Lands work can be divided into several basic program areas:

- Land Status and Ownership
- Land Adjustments
- Surveying and Boundary Management
- Rights-of-way Acquisition
- Lands Special Uses, and

Land Status and Ownership is the condition of title of land or interest in land under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. The following conditions are included in land status and ownership:

- the manner in which lands came into Federal ownership such as exchange, purchase, donation, transfer, boundary modification, title claims, sales, grants, excess property;
- interests owned by the government in private lands such as rights-of-way acquired;
- encumbrances or interest in government lands held by others such as rights-of-way granted, reservations, outstanding rights, partial interests, easements; and
- use restrictions which affect the administration of the land such as withdrawals, designations, dedications, wilderness, other special areas.

Land Adjustments can occur through exchange, donation, transfer, boundary modification, title claims, sales, grants, excess property.

- The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests comprise approximately 3,904,128 acres
- Since 1987, there was an increase in NFS ownership of 809 acres on the Nez Perce National Forest
- Since 1987, there was a decrease in NFS ownership of 5,622 acres on the Clearwater National Forest.

The objectives of the **Surveying and Boundary Management** group are to provide Forest Service land managers and the public with visible and legally defensible property boundary lines, surveyed and marked on the ground and to accurately depict the location of these ownership boundaries on administrative maps.

- There are a total of 1550 miles of property boundaries to administer on the combined forests including inholdings. (Does not include special interest areas.)
- Approximately 1100 miles of boundaries have been surveyed and marked in the past 50 years.
- The remaining 450 miles are the most difficult to survey.
- Sometimes it is necessary to mark boundaries of special interest areas such as Wilderness or wild and scenic rivers corridors. There are approximately 717 miles of this type of boundary on the forests that are unmarked at this time.

Forest Service Manual guidance recommends existing (already surveyed) marked and posted boundary lines shall be “maintained” every 20 years. The 2013 assigned target for combined maintenance and new

boundary posting is 17 miles. Authority for Boundary Management comes through Congress under the Organic Act of 1897, and Public Law 97-465 commonly known as the Small Tracts Act.

Rights-of-way Acquisition is legal rights-of-ways acquired by the Forest Service across non-national forest system land for the management and public use of NFS land. The Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forests have acquired legal access to many of the main access roads/entry points to NFS lands. However, there are areas on the Forests where it would be valuable to obtain legal access for improved recreational access and management opportunities. There is also a continuing need to acquire permanent or temporary access on a project-by-project basis. Where access to NFS lands was never perfected in the past, it is getting harder to work with private landowners to gain permanent legal access.

Lands Special Uses include permits, leases and easements that allow occupancy, use, rights or privileges on National Forest System (NFS) land. Objectives of the program are to manage the use and occupancy of NFS land in a manner that protects natural resource values, promotes public health and safety and is consistent with laws, regulations and forest plans.

- The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest currently has 372 lands special use authorizations.
- 209 of these existing authorizations are for transportation related uses.
- 67 authorizations are for water related facilities such as water lines for domestic and irrigation use.
- 33 authorizations are for communication uses, 20 of which are for communication facilities such as internet, AM/FM radio and private and commercial mobile radio. These facilities are commonly associated with high mountain tops where better coverage can be achieved.
- Over the past 5 years an average of 27 new or reissued authorizations were processed annually.